

I. GROWTH AND ANNEXATION HISTORY

In 1784, five years after Richmond County was formed, Rockingham was established as the seat of County government. State legislation "authorized and empowered (the commissioners) to lay out all public lands by them purchased for the use of the public at Richmond Court House into a town of half-acre lots, with proper street, etc., which shall be called by the name of Rockingham." The commissioners elected to purchase fifty acres of land. A map indicating the manner in which the acreage was subdivided is shown on the accompanying page.

It was estimated that the town had about one hundred residents in the late 1700s and by 1840 had grown to four hundred and fifty. From 1874 to about 1923, the Rockingham area became the site for establishment of a number of textile mills. Mills established were the Pee Dee #1 in 1874, Midway Mill in 1881, Roberdel Mill #1 in 1882, Great Falls Mill in 1883, Roberdel #2 in 1902, Hannah Pickett #1 in 1908, Entwistle Mill in 1910 and Leak Mill in 1923.

The majority of these mills were developed outside the city limits of Rockingham. Midway Mill was located in the small incorporated town of Lewarae, presently referred to as the "Midway Area". Roberdel Mill was incorporated into the town of Roberdel. In some instances, it was the policy of the mills to construct housing for their employees which necessitated water, sewer and street systems. There was a great deal of growth throughout these years, but little of it was incorporated into the City of Rockingham. As stated in the Post-Dispatch, which traced the City and County's historical background in its July 30th issue "the boundaries have been little changed since the town was laid out on April 1, 1785-166 years ago. The area is the most constricted of any town in the State."

This constriction can readily be seen in the following table. Rockingham is located in parts of Wolf Pit and Rockingham townships. Census population figures for these townships, in contrast to the Town of Rockingham, indicate the amount of development which has and is continuing to take place outside the incorporated limits. For the past fifty years, with the exception of 1960, the percent increase in population was greater and the number of persons living in the townships was larger than that of the Town. This is especially significant since this growth is contiguous with the City's development.

The major reason for the City's population increase of sixty four percent during the 1950-60 decade was annexation in 1954 and again in 1957. It can be estimated that Rockingham annexed approximately 2,000 people between 1950 and 1960. According to the 1960 census figures, there are over 2.8 times as many people living in the townships. Had annexation not occurred, this figure would stand at over 6.3 times the City's population. An estimate of the population living in developments